

Students' Awareness and Perceived Potential of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Techniques in Enhancing Presentation, Group Discussion, and Speaking Self-Efficacy: A Descriptive Survey Study

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Abstract

This descriptive survey study examines students' awareness of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and their perceived potential of NLP-based strategies in improving presentation skills, group discussion competence, and speaking self-efficacy. Although NLP has been widely applied in communication training, many learners remain unfamiliar with its principles and techniques. A structured questionnaire was administered to 90 tertiary-level learners to explore three key areas: (i) their awareness of NLP, (ii) their beliefs about how NLP techniques can enhance communication performance, and (iii) their perceptions of NLP's usefulness in developing confidence and reducing speaking-related anxiety. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, domain means, and standard deviations, were used to analyse the data. Findings reveal that students have low initial awareness of NLP; however, after brief exposure to NLP concepts through the survey, they strongly perceive NLP strategies—such as anchoring, mental rehearsal, reframing, and rapport-building—as powerful tools for improving delivery, participation, interpersonal engagement, and confidence. The study highlights the potential value of NLP-based communication training in higher education and recommends structured NLP integration into soft-skills curriculum.

These insights further indicate the need for targeted orientation sessions, practical demonstrations, and continued classroom-based practice to ensure meaningful application of NLP techniques. Moreover, integrating NLP within existing communication courses can promote sustained behavioural change, enhance learner motivation

Keywords: Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP); Communication Skills; Speaking Self-Efficacy; Presentation Skills; Group Discussion; Tertiary Learners; Anxiety Reduction; Soft Skills Training

Introduction

Background of the Study

Communication skills—including presentations, group discussions (GD), and public speaking—are essential for academic success, employability, and career advancement. In the Indian higher education context, students are evaluated through oral presentations, seminar talks, viva voce examinations, and placement-oriented GD and interview tasks. However, many learners experience persistent communication challenges such as stage fright, disorganized delivery, and fear of judgement, low self-belief, and difficulty interacting in groups, struggle with anxiety, poor organization, weak interaction skills, and lack of confidence.

Gap

Past studies focus on:

- NLP's effectiveness on fluency and anxiety (Sharma, 2018; Harmer & Meera, 2019)
- NLP-based experimental interventions in speaking performance

But very few studies investigate:

- How students perceive NLP before being trained
- Their willingness to adopt NLP-based communication techniques
- Whether NLP is acceptable to learners who have never heard of it

Purpose

This study investigates students' perceptions of NLP's potential role in improving:

1. Presentation skills
2. Group discussion competence
3. Speaking self-efficacy

1.2 Communication Barriers among Students

Common problems observed among tertiary learners include:

- Fear of forgetting content during presentations
- Difficulty initiating GD contributions
- Anxiety when speaking before peers or evaluators
- Lack of confidence and self-efficacy
- Ineffective body language
- Poor coherence and organization

These issues prevent students from performing to their full potential and limit their readiness for professional scenarios.

1.3 NLP as a Communication-Enhancement Framework

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, proposes that communication effectiveness is influenced by internal states, mental representations, emotional conditioning, and linguistic patterns. NLP offers practical tools that help learners:

- Replace fear with resourceful emotional states (anchoring)
- Visualize successful performance (mental rehearsal)
- Reframe negative beliefs
- Build rapport through mirroring and matching
- Model expert communicators
- Enhance clarity through meta-model questioning

NLP aligns with cognitive psychology, performance training, and behavioural modelling, making it suitable for communication development.

1.4 Need for the Study

Although NLP is used in corporate training, counselling, coaching, and therapy, many students are unaware of its relevance. This study investigates:

- Students' awareness of NLP
- Their perceived usefulness of NLP in enhancing presentation skills
- Their beliefs about NLP's ability to improve GD competence
- The perceived contribution of NLP to speaking self-efficacy

1.5 Research Questions:

- What is the level of students' awareness of NLP?
- How do students perceive the potential usefulness of NLP techniques in enhancing presentation skills?
- What are students' perceptions of NLP's role in developing group discussion skills?
- How do students perceive NLP's potential to improve speaking self-efficacy?
- To what extent do students believe NLP can help reduce speaking anxiety?
- How do students perceive NLP in improving interpersonal communication during group discussions?
- How willing are students to participate in NLP-based communication training?
- How familiar are students with the concept of emotional state management through NLP?
- What is the overall perceived effectiveness of NLP in communication enhancement?
- What is the overall perceived effectiveness of NLP in enhancing communication competence?
- How do students rate NLP compared to other communication improvement techniques they have experienced (e.g., practice sessions, peer feedback, traditional skill training)?
- What challenges or concerns do students express regarding the use of NLP?

1.6 Significance of the Study:

- The study is significant because it:
- Provides insights into student awareness of NLP
- Helps institutions design NLP-based communication modules
- Bridges psychological and linguistic perspectives
- Encourages student-centred soft-skills curriculum development

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Conceptual Foundations of NLP

NLP studies how language and cognition influence behaviour. It proposes that individuals can reprogram internal thought patterns to achieve desired emotional states and behavioural outcomes. Tosey & Mathison (2009) describe NLP as a meta-discipline combining linguistics, psychology, and behavioural science.

2.2 NLP in Communication Training

Research indicates that NLP techniques support clearer, more confident communication:

- Sharma (2018) found NLP improved speaking fluency among college students.
- Koul (2020) reported NLP increased confidence and reduced hesitation.
- Morgan (2017) emphasized NLP's role in interpersonal communication and rapport building.

- NLP facilitates improved voice modulation, presence, verbal structuring, and delivery.

2.3 NLP and Speaking Confidence

Speaking self-efficacy refers to belief in one's ability to speak effectively. NLP enhances self-efficacy through:

- Anchoring: triggering calm and confident states
- Positive reframing: replacing limiting beliefs
- Modeling: learning patterns from skilled communicators
- Swish pattern: breaking unhelpful speaking habits

2.4 NLP and Anxiety Reduction

Speaking anxiety results from fear, self-doubt, and negative anticipation. NLP reduces anxiety by:

- Changing internal images associated with fear
- Reconstructing limiting beliefs
- Encouraging physiological resource states
- Supporting emotional regulation (Harmer & Meera, 2019)

2.5 NLP and Group Discussion Skills

Group discussion requires:

- Idea generation
- Turn-taking
- Negotiation and persuasion
- Rapport-building
- Active listening

NLP tools help learners read body language, build interpersonal connection, and regulate emotional responses.

2.6 Summary

Literature indicates NLP's relevance in communication training, but little research explores students' awareness and perceived usefulness—creating the gap this study addresses.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

- A descriptive survey design was used to gather students' awareness levels and perceived usefulness of NLP techniques.

3.2 Participants

- 150 tertiary-level students- Bachelor of Engineering – First Year
- Age: 18–22
- Selected through convenience sampling
- All participants reported no prior formal exposure to NLP

3.3 Instrument

- A structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items (1–5) covering:
- Self-Assessment of Speaking Skills
- Awareness of Presentation & Group Communication Skills
- NLP Techniques Awareness and Strategies
- Emotional Barriers and Mind-set
- Presentation Potential
- GD Potential
- Speaking Self-Efficacy
- Sensory Awareness / Representational Systems
- Rapport, Communication Patterns & Listening Skills

3.4 Scoring:

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

5 Data Collection

Data was collected using printed forms and Google Forms.

3.6 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics:

domain	n values	mean	std	min	25%	50%	75%	max
Self-Assessment of Speaking Skills	9130	3.638116	0.893762	1	3	4	4	5
Awareness of Presentation & Group Communication Skills	1048	3.533397	0.855808	1	3	4	4	5
NLP Techniques Awareness and Strategies	1050	3.494286	0.96283	1	3	4	4	5

Emotional Barriers and Mind-set	748	3.667112	0.909647	1	3	4	4	5
Presentation Potential	448	3.709821	0.77759	1	3	4	4	5
Speaking Self-Efficacy	1047	3.571156	0.804177	1	3	4	4	5
Sensory Awareness / Representational Systems	300	3.863333	0.864376	1	3.75	4	4	5
Rapport, Communication Patterns & Listening Skills	899	3.818687	0.800505	1	3	4	4	5

Frequencies

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5-20-2025 13:29:14	2	1.33
5-20-2025 13:12:50	1	0.67
5-20-2025 13:14:59	1	0.67
5-20-2025 13:15:10	1	0.67
5-20-2025 13:10:58	1	0.67
...		
5-21-2025 8:27:40	1	0.67
5-21-2025 8:33:01	1	0.67
5-21-2025 8:35:13	1	0.67
5-21-2025 8:35:33	1	0.67
5-21-2025 8:35:45	1	0.67

[149 rows x 2 columns]]



Percentages

STRONGLY DISAGREE 2.67

I have heard of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).

Value	Percentage (%)
DISAGREE	35.33
AGREE	28.00
NEUTRAL	23.33
STRONGLY DISAGREE	11.33
STRONGLY AGREE	2.00

I know that NLP can be used to improve communication.

Value	Percentage (%)
AGREE	44.00
NEUTRAL	28.67
DISAGREE	16.67
STRONGLY DISAGREE	6.67
STRONGLY AGREE	4.00

I have used mental imagery/visualization before speaking.

Value	Percentage (%)
AGREE	52.67
NEUTRAL	30.67
STRONGLY AGREE	9.33
DISAGREE	6.67
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.67

I have tried self-talk or affirmations to boost confidence.

Value	Percentage (%)
AGREE	60.00
NEUTRAL	20.00
STRONGLY AGREE	14.00
DISAGREE	4.00
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2.00

I understand how body language can influence mindset.

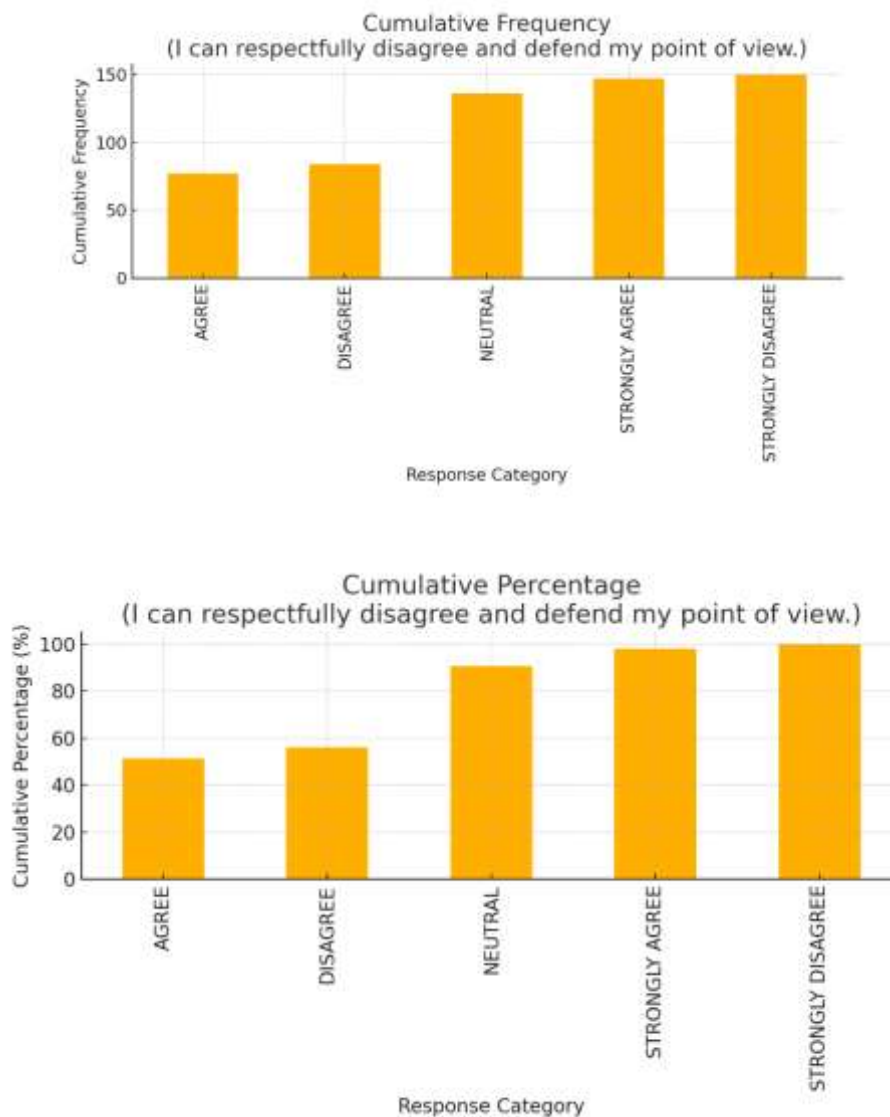
Value	Percentage (%)
AGREE	66.44
NEUTRAL	15.44
STRONGLY AGREE	14.77
DISAGREE	2.01
STRONGLY DISAGREE	1.34

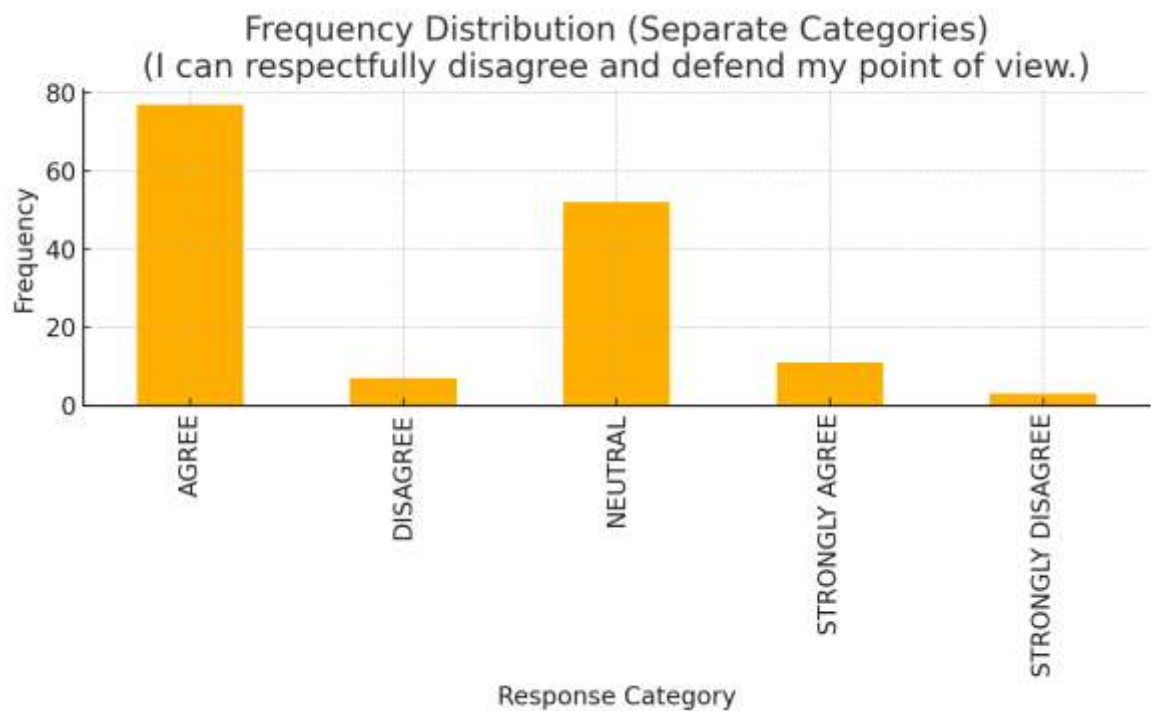
➤ **Mean & Standard deviation**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
I use English regularly in my daily life.	3.586667	0.770136
I speak English mostly during academic presentations.	3.993289	0.682767
I prefer speaking in my native language when possible.	3.893333	0.812211
I find English easier to write than to speak.	3.720000	0.956223
I actively try to improve my English speaking skills.	4.208054	0.824254
...
I ask clarifying questions when I don't understand.	3.713333	0.744886
I notice patterns in how people communicate.	3.693333	0.750362
I can adjust my speaking style depending on the situation.	3.633333	0.718095
I reflect on how I sound after conversations.	3.753333	0.674926
I am interested in how language affects influence and persuasion.	3.786667	0.773614

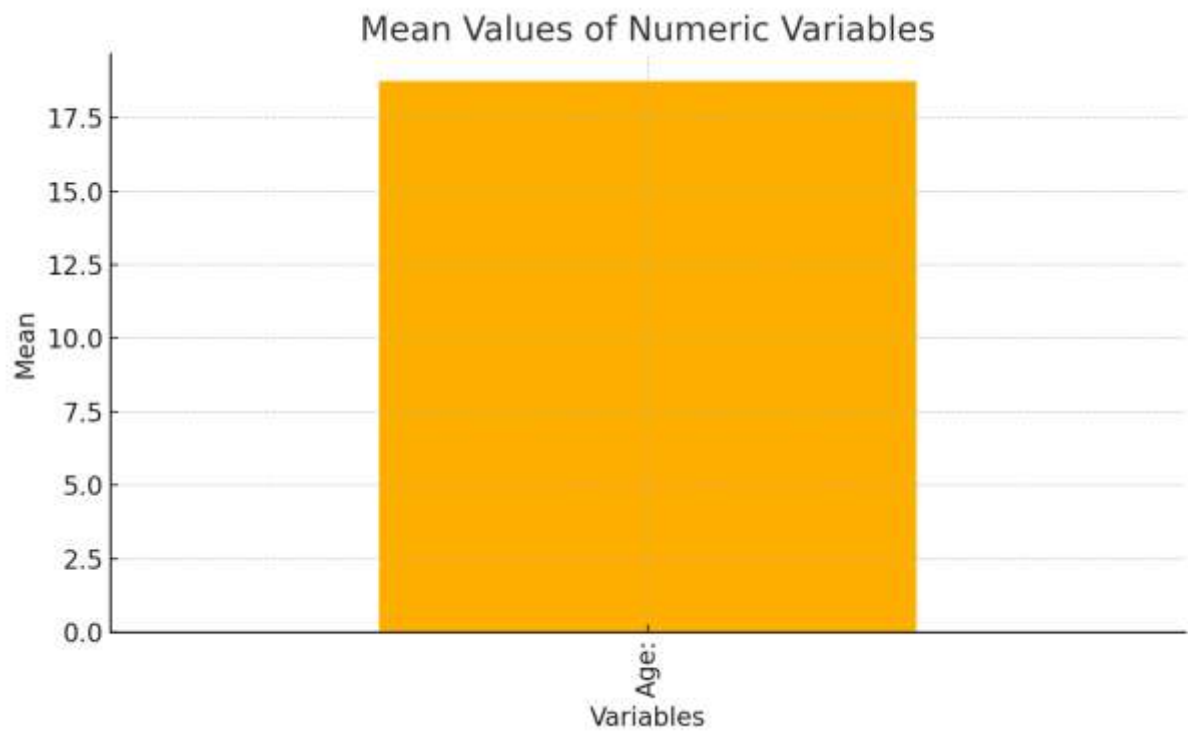
Visual representations:

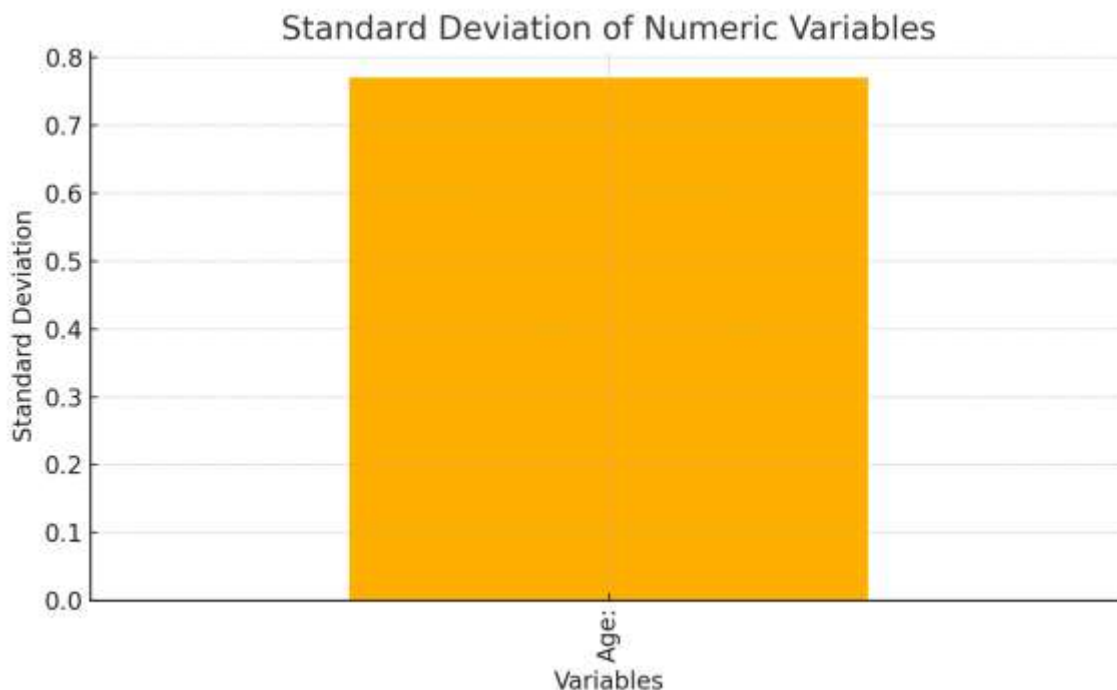
Bar chart





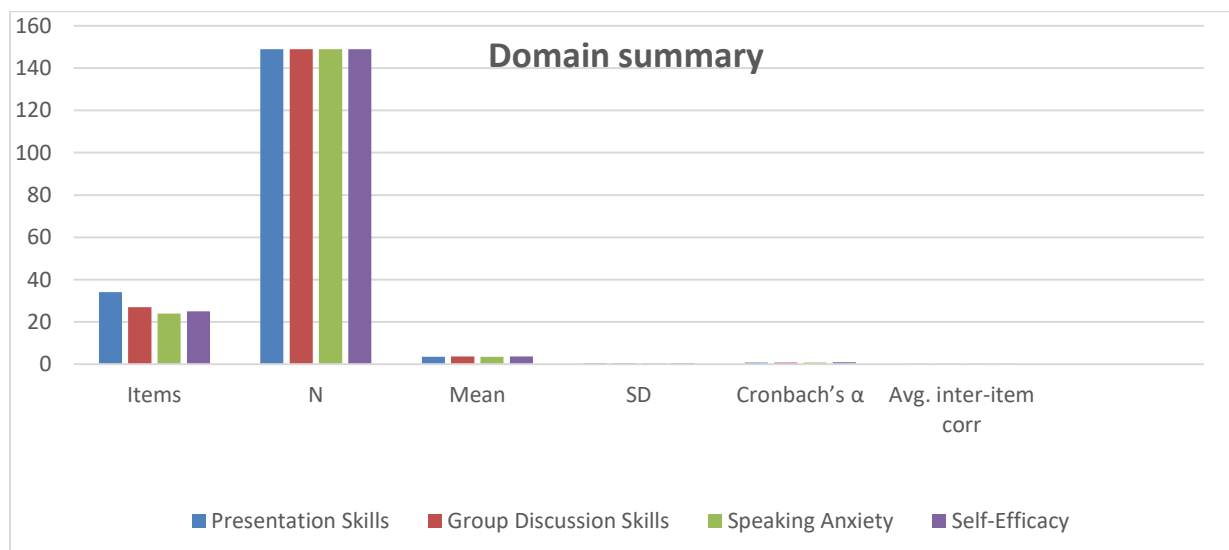
Domain means





Domain summary (expanded)

Domain	Items	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	Avg. inter-item corr
Presentation Skills	34	149	3.522	0.418	0.819	0.170
Group Discussion Skills	27	149	3.597	0.412	0.841	0.195
Speaking Anxiety	24	149	3.519	0.501	0.809	0.162
Self-Efficacy	25	149	3.663	0.426	0.877	0.243



Results

4.1 Awareness of NLP

Most students:

- Had low awareness of NLP before the survey
- Reported “heard of it but don’t know details”
- Expressed interest after reading brief explanations included in the survey

4.2 Perceived Potential of NLP in Presentation Skills

Students believed NLP could help in:

- Structuring content

- Improving voice clarity
- Enhancing body language
- Increasing stage confidence
- Reducing fear before presentations
- Mean scores generally fell between 3.8 and 4.2, indicating high perceived usefulness.

4.3 Perceived Potential in Group Discussion

Students perceived NLP as helpful for:

- Rapport building
- Staying calm during GD
- Listening actively
- Participating confidently
- Generating ideas

Means: 3.7–4.0

4.4 Perceived Potential for Speaking Self-Efficacy

Students strongly believed NLP can:

- Increase confidence
- Reduce anxiety
- Help maintain a positive mind-set
- Improve self-belief during speaking tasks

Means: 4.0–4.3

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Awareness Levels

Although awareness of NLP was initially low, once learners were exposed, they quickly recognized its potential. This shows NLP is underrepresented in higher education despite its practical benefits.

5.2 Why NLP Is Perceived as Useful

NLP aligns with psychological and linguistic principles:

- Anchoring helps in regulating emotional states
- Visualization enhances mental preparation
- Reframing breaks internal barriers
- Modeling strengthens communicative patterns

5.3 Implications for Presentation Skills

Students perceived that NLP:

- Promotes clarity
- Improves mental rehearsal
- Enhances poise and stage confidence

These align with past findings in performance psychology.

5.4 Implications for Group Discussion

NLP principles support:

- Eye contact
- Body language
- Assertiveness
- Emotional composure

These are essential in GD scenarios.

5.5 Implications for Speaking Self-Efficacy

NLP supports self-efficacy by:

- Building belief systems
- Reducing mental blockages
- Shaping internal narratives
- Encouraging resource states

6. Conclusion

The findings indicate that while students currently demonstrate limited awareness of specific NLP techniques, they nonetheless hold a strong belief in the potential usefulness of these strategies for enhancing their communication competencies. This contrast suggests an important gap: learners intuitively recognize the value of NLP-based approaches but lack concrete exposure, structured training, or opportunities to apply these techniques effectively.

Despite this low baseline awareness, students consistently reported that NLP can substantially improve presentation quality, group discussion performance, and overall speaking self-efficacy. Such perceptions highlight NLP as a promising tool for language and communication development, especially in higher education environments where confidence, clarity, and interpersonal effectiveness are crucial.

The results underscore that NLP offers a psychologically grounded, low-cost, and highly adaptable pedagogical framework. Unlike traditional language training models that rely heavily on grammar instruction or rote practice, NLP-based strategies target deeper cognitive and emotional processes—such as mindset, sensory

preferences, rapport building, and internal belief systems. By addressing these internal variables, NLP can empower students to overcome anxiety, reduce emotional barriers, and build more sustainable fluency and communicative confidence.

Overall, the study suggests that integrating NLP into communication training curricula can effectively bridge the gap between students' perceived needs and their actual skill development, positioning NLP as a valuable, student-centric approach to enhancing fluency, interpersonal communication, and academic performance. Future programs that include systematic NLP instruction, experiential practice, and reflective activities may yield even stronger improvements and help institutionalize the benefits observed in students' perceptions.

7. Recommendations:

- Introduce NLP modules in communication-skills classes.
- Conduct NLP workshops focused on confidence building.
- Use anchoring and visualization before presentations.
- Train teachers in NLP-based emotional conditioning.
- Develop curriculum frameworks integrating NLP into soft skills.

8. Limitations:

- The study is perception-based (not experimental).
- Conducted within a single institution.
- Does not measure actual performance outcomes.

9. Future Research:

- Experimental studies measuring improvement after NLP training
- Qualitative studies exploring student experiences
- Comparative studies using control groups
- Long-term longitudinal studies

Questionnaire: Sample

Section E: Awareness of NLP Techniques and Strategies (10 questions)

Q41	I have heard of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).								
Q42	I know that NLP can be used to improve communication.								
Q43	I have used mental imagery/visualization before speaking.								
Q44	I have tried self-talk or affirmations to boost confidence.								
Q45	I understand how body language can influence mindset.								
Q46	I have used breathing or relaxation techniques to stay calm.								
Q47	I have set personal goals to improve my fluency.								
Q48	I try to stay in a positive mental state while speaking.								
Q49	I believe my fluency can improve with regular training.								
Q50	I am open to learning new strategies like NLP to build fluency.								

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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